

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Memorandum



THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

Information as of 1600
24 October 1966

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HIGHLIGHTS

A Viet Cong defector has provided information pinpointing the location of the Communist military and political headquarters in South Vietnam. He also claimed that Chinese personnel were present at this headquarters but did not know what their function was.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam: Communist forces reportedly launched heavy mortar attacks early on 24 October against a US Marine regimental command post near the Demilitarized Zone in northern Quang Tri Province (Para. 1) and against elements of the US 173rd Airborne Brigade guarding the defense perimeters of Da Nang Air Base (Para. 2). US Marines and ARVN forces are continuing to inflict heavy losses on enemy troop concentrations 25 miles south-southwest of Da Nang (Paras. 3-4). Sustained fighting was reported on 23 October between elements of the US 25th Infantry Division and an estimated Viet Cong platoon during the conduct of Operation PAUL REVERE IV some 21 miles west of Pleiku city (Para. 5). Vietnamese Communist propaganda is now emphasizing the role of guerrilla tactics in contrast to the stress put on regular or mobile warfare six months ago (Paras. 6-9). A Viet Cong defector has pinpointed the location of the Communist headquarters for all of South Vietnam and claims that foreign personnel including Chinese were present (Paras. 10-11).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The committee work of the Constituent Assembly has been completed, thus paving the way for the election of the permanent officers (Paras 3-4).

[REDACTED]

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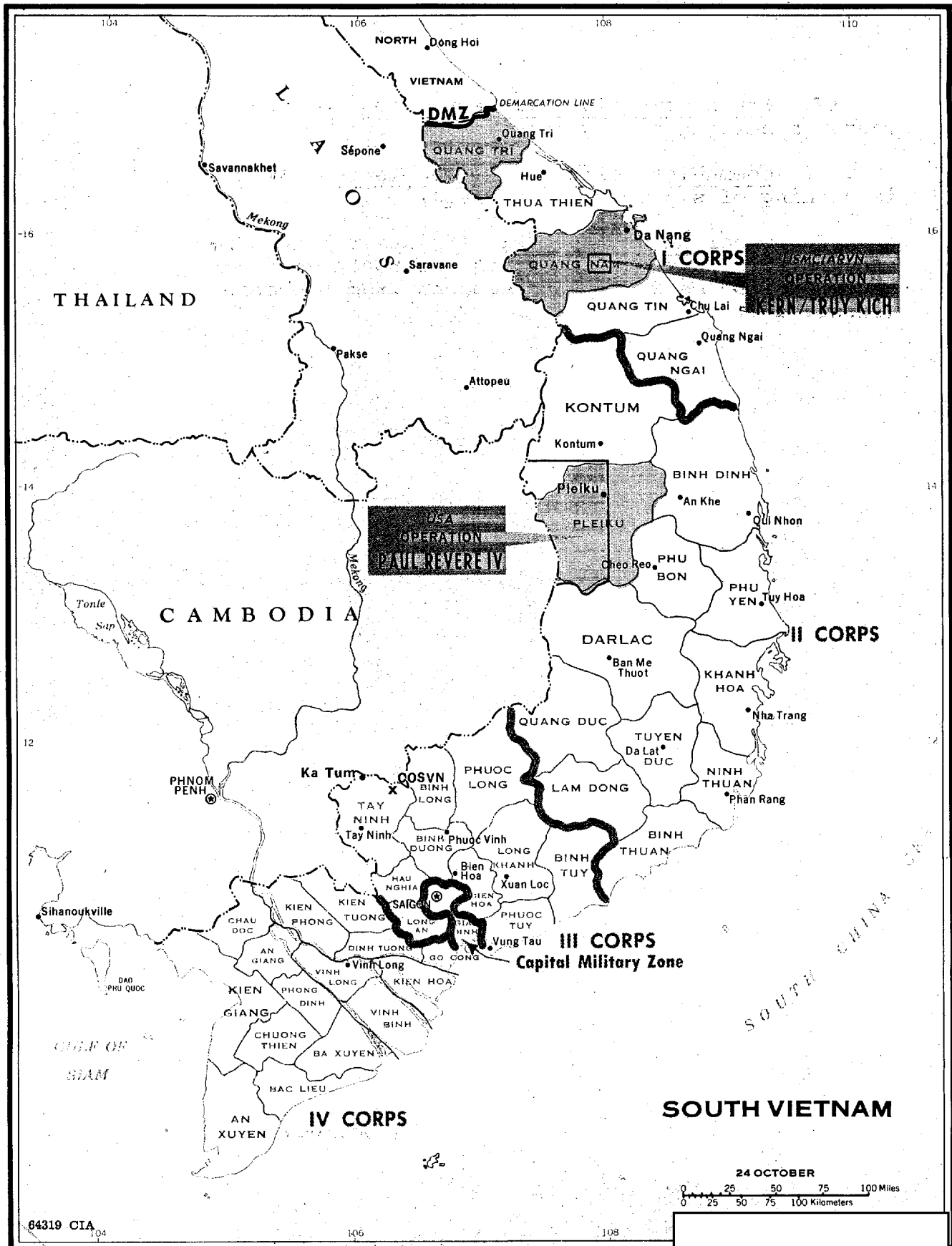
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IV. Other Communist Military Developments:
There is nothing of significance to report.

V. Communist Political Developments: There
is nothing of significance to report.

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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. According to unconfirmed press reports, North Vietnamese Army units shelled the command post of the 7th US Marine Regiment just south of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) in northernmost Quang Tri Province with an estimated 40 rounds of heavy mortar fire early on 24 October. The attack reportedly occurred before dawn, with the enemy taking full advantage of the darkness and the heavy monsoon rains which blanketed the area. Two of three US helicopters dispatched to the scene to evacuate casualties were said to have crashed due to the bad weather. Over-all US casualties were described as light.

2. Elements of the US 173rd Airborne Brigade guarding the defense perimeter around Da Nang Air Base also reportedly came under Viet Cong mortar attack early on 24 October. Approximately 15 mortar rounds allegedly hit the US defenses, resulting in light friendly casualties.

Allied Operations

3. Allied forces are continuing to encounter significant enemy troop concentrations about 25 miles south-southwest of Da Nang, in Quang Nam Province. On 23 October, two US Marine companies operating in coordination with elements of an ARVN regiment observed an estimated force of 200 Viet Cong advancing toward their field positions. Supported by heavy artillery bombardment, the marines killed 25 Communists while sustaining friendly casualties of only two wounded. In a three-hour contact with enemy units in this same area on 22 October, US Marines killed 18 Viet Cong while losing seven killed and 14 wounded. To 24 October, the five-day-old USMC/ARVN offensive--Operation KERN/TRUY KICH--had resulted in cumulative enemy losses of 304 killed and 50 weapons captured, in contrast to friendly losses of 42 killed (eight US), 142 wounded (28 US), and 40 missing.

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5. In Cambodian border surveillance Operation PAUL REVERE IV, one company of the US 25th Infantry Division engaged an estimated Viet Cong platoon on 23 October approximately 21 miles west of Pleiku city. The enemy broke contact after nearly five-and-a-half hours of combat, leaving behind 13 dead and two captured. One American was wounded. The enemy force may have been tasked with the mission of probing US defenses in the area, possibly in preparation for major offensive operations by elements of the 630th North Vietnamese Army (NVA) Division which are known to have recently deployed to the southwestern Kontum - northern Pleiku Province region.

Vietnamese Communists Re-emphasizing Guerrilla Warfare

6. A recent spate of North Vietnamese and Viet Cong propaganda has been emphasizing alleged successes of Communist guerrilla warfare tactics and stressing the continuing importance of this form of peoples' war in the continuing struggle in South Vietnam. This is in contrast to Vietnamese Communist propaganda earlier this year which laid heavy emphasis on the need to fight large-scale, mobile warfare despite the US buildup.

7. The impetus for the current propaganda may have come from the "third guerrilla warfare conference" which was recently held by the VC in South Vietnam. Much of the commentary deals with Communist success in interdicting and keeping closed lines of communication and in scattering and tying down large numbers of US and South Vietnamese forces. The articles

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also stress the significant attrition of opposing forces by these methods. One article states that these tactics have enabled guerrilla units, in coordination with regular and regional units, to carry out many operations which "had the nature of campaigns." These actions are further described as "new characteristics" of guerrilla warfare.

8. Nevertheless, the over-all tone of the propaganda indicates the defensive military posture of the Communists. Guerrilla activity is viewed in Communist strategic thinking as essentially a response to enemy offensive activity rather than as a Communist offensive tactic. Repeated references are made to the defeat of the last US "dry-season offensive" and the capability the Communists have--through guerrilla warfare--to defeat the coming dry season offensive. The tasks of the guerrilla warfare movement as reflected at the recent conference also appear defensive in nature. They are "to wear out and destroy enemy potential, to oppose the plan for pacification and the herding of people, and to struggle against the US aggressors' dry season counteroffensive scheme." Another article spoke of many attacks on isolated outposts and bases, but plaintively asserts that "without support from artillery and planes, many encircled posts would have fallen in one day."

9. This re-emphasis on guerrilla tactics comes at a time when the Communists have been on the defensive for over a year. It may suggest that another of the periodic military evaluations have taken place and that the Communists realize that they have not devoted enough attention to developing guerrilla warfare. In fact, numerous reports have revealed that the Viet Cong depleted the ranks of their guerrilla forces in mid-1965 in an effort to strengthen their regular military forces.

VC Headquarters Located

10. Another VC defector,

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[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] adds another confirmation to the report that North Vietnamese General Nguyen Chi Thanh is in South Vietnam heading COSVN. This defector claims that Thanh's two principal assistants are North Vietnamese Generals Le Trong Tan and Tran Do.

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11. The source also pinpointed the location of COSVN headquarters as being 15 miles north of Katum village on the Cambodia border. He further reported that he had seen foreigners in the area of the COSVN headquarters. He claims to have seen Chinese, Russians, Cubans, and French, and that all except the Chinese were journalists. He did not know the function of the Chinese. [REDACTED]

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

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Constituent Assembly

3. The procedural committee of the Constituent Assembly has completed its work and the election of permanent officers is tentatively scheduled for the morning of 26 October. All 117 delegates were finally validated by the credentials committee and a final list of rules, consisting of 97 articles, was approved during the 22 October meeting.

4. The controversial clause of the assembly's founding decree, which authorizes the chief of state to amend the draft constitution, has not yet been discussed by the assembly. The deputies, however, reportedly issued a communiqué on 11 October which contained a clause that caused some consternation among members of the ruling Directorate. [REDACTED]

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IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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